

Translated into 58 different languages (including 23 from Asia and 7 from Africa), this letter, written by Brother Roger of Taizé, will be a starting-point for reflection throughout the year 2002 during the weekly meetings in Taizé as well as those held in other parts of the world.

Letter from Taizé

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LOVE AND SAY IT WITH YOUR LIFE

Letter 2002

1 "Love and say it with your life": these words were written three centuries after Christ by a Christian from North Africa, Saint Augustine.

2 "All God can do is give his love." These words come from a Christian thinker of the seventh century named Isaac of Nineveh. He reached this conclusion after having studied Saint John's Gospel for a long time and meditated on the words "God is love" (1 John 4:8,16).

3 God loves every human being on earth, but God does not impose himself and does not force anybody to love him.

Today more than ever before, a call is arising to open paths of trust even in humanity's darkest hours. Can we hear that call?

There are people who, by giving themselves, attest that human beings are not doomed to hopelessness. Are we among them?¹

More and more people throughout the world are becoming aware of how urgent it is to come to the aid of the victims of poverty, a poverty that is constantly on the rise. This is a basic necessity to make peace on earth possible.

The disparity between the accumulation of wealth by some and the poverty of countless others is one of the most serious questions of our time. Will we do all in our power for the world economy to provide solutions?

Neither misfortunes nor the injustice of poverty come from God; all God can do is give his love.²

And so we are filled with astonishment when we discover that God looks at every human being with infinite tenderness and deep compassion.³

When we realize that God loves us, that God loves even the most forsaken human being, then our hearts open to others. We are made more aware of the dignity of the human person and we ask ourselves: how can we prepare ways of trust on earth?⁴

However powerless we may be, are we not called to communicate a mystery of hope to those around us by the lives we live?⁵

Others can recognize our trust in God when we express it by the simple giving of our own lives. Faith becomes credible and is passed on above all when it is lived out.⁶

God's presence is a breath that fills the entire universe; it is an inrush of love, light and peace on earth.

Borne forward by this breath of life, we are drawn to live in communion with others⁷ and we are led to make the hope of peace a reality in the human family. May this communion and this hope shine out all around us!⁸

By his Holy Spirit, God penetrates the depths of our being; he knows how we are longing to respond to the call of his love. And so we can ask him, "How can I discover what you want of me? My heart is troubled: how can I perceive your call?"

And in inner silence this answer can well up: "Dare to give your life for others; there you will find meaning for your existence."

One day we may find ourselves saying to God:

"The days passed and I did not respond to your call. I went so far as to ask myself: do I really need God? Hesitations and doubts made me drift away from you.

"But even when I remained far from you, you were waiting for me. I thought I had been abandoned, and you were alongside me.

"Day by day, you renew within me the spontaneity which allows me to hold true in a 'yes' to Christ. You look at me with such understanding that my 'yes' will be able to carry me onward until my last breath."

4 The love of God placed in each one of us is a precious treasure. From this treasure, a force of compassion lasting a whole lifetime can spring up.

5 For many years now, we have realized how necessary it is that some brothers of our community share the life of the very poor in the Southern continents. For example, a few brothers have been living in Bangladesh for the last twenty-seven years. They look after the ill and the handicapped. They invite the destitute to share meals with them. They support small schools for children from poor families. From the outset they established a trusting relationship with Muslim believers.

6 We can give our own life to the point of forgetting ourselves for others. In Taizé, sisters have been helping with the welcome for over forty years. They are concerned to understand the young women and to listen to them. The welcome they offer can be so authentic that we say to ourselves: these women are a Gospel treasure.

7 Christ did not come to earth to start a new religion but to offer every human being a communion in God. In God's heart, that communion which is the Church cannot be divided. And so it is essential for the undivided Church, still hidden but a reality in God, to be made manifest.

8 Peace on earth begins within us. As early as the fourth century Saint Ambrose of Milan said, "Begin the work of peace within yourself so that, once you are at peace yourself, you can bring peace to others."

Pope John Paul II

To Brother Roger of Taizé

Dear Brother, for the twenty-fourth time, the Taizé Community is inviting young people to a new stage in its "pilgrimage of trust on earth," which is taking place this year in Budapest. In thanking God for this initiative, the Pope sends his warm greetings to those who have responded to your invitation and assures them of his brotherly prayer.

The presence of young adults from throughout the world, gathered together in prayer and concord, witnesses to the deep longing for peace and brotherhood which dwells in the human heart. At a time when the world, torn apart, a prey to violence and fear, is searching for signs of hope, the Holy Father invites the participants to open the doors of their heart with confidence to Christ, to his saving power, a force of love able to give birth to true peacemakers. He encourages them, at the dawn of this new millennium, to be "watchers for the dawn" (cf. Isaiah 21:11-12) who dare to make a bold and radical choice of faith and of life, in this way offering to humanity the gifts characteristic of the young: hope, joy, the ability to serve and to give oneself to build a society more worthy of human beings and to proclaim Christ to the world. May our time see apostles arise who are sustained by the hope "that does not disappoint us" (Romans 5,5) and filled with the strength and the gentleness of the Holy Spirit, who will find ways of bearing witness to Christ, encountered and appreciated in the silence of the prayer of the heart, the Emmanuel who by his Incarnation brings true Peace!

By the intercession of Our Lady, the Holy Father invokes the Lord's blessing on the young people taking part in this meeting, on the community which is organizing it, as well as on the parishes and families who welcome them.

Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

I send my heartfelt greetings to the meeting of young Christians from many countries of the world prepared by the Taizé Community. The tradition of organizing such a meeting, whose purpose is to support good and brotherly relations between representatives of different Christian denominations, takes on particular significance at a time when the world has been shaken by unprecedented manifestations of religious extremism.

I am convinced that, for those who inspire the ideologies and for the heads of terrorist movements, religion is only a pretext to attain their ignoble aims. It is impossible to love God and to hate God's most perfect creature, the human being. "Anyone who claims to be in the light but who hates his brother or sister is still in the darkness," writes Saint John the apostle (1 John 2:9).

It is essential for you to understand this, young people, for the future of the world belongs to you. Today we are once again convinced of the essential role that religion plays in the life of humanity. And the spiritual situation of the whole world—either a kingdom of violence and evil, or of the love asked for by our Savior (John 15:12)—will depend on whether or not peaceful and benevolent relationships are established between representatives of different religions and Christian confessions.

It is only possible to live out the commandment of the love of neighbor which God has given us by setting out in the steps of the founder of our faith, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a road of humility and self-giving that requires being ready to go to the point of "giving one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). For you, young people who are entering the twenty-first century, it must also be a

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan

Dear friends from Taizé and elsewhere, it is with great pleasure that I address to all my warm greetings on the occasion of this new stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth." At a time when some are trying to divide the human family, it is comforting to know that so many of you—from different backgrounds, nationalities and cultures—are united in a common desire to meet and to share.

You have come to this beautiful city of Budapest to reflect together on the essence of your faith and your commitment to the Church, but also to other people. In these troubled times, your reflection takes on a special dimension.

It seems to me that it is more important than ever to reaffirm our attachment to peace and to remember that lasting peace requires a struggle on several fronts: to deliver humankind from the scourge of war, from the abject misery that strips us of our human identity, and from the threat to have to live on a polluted planet where almost no natural resources remain.

World leaders committed themselves to do all in their power to reach these goals during last year's millennium summit meeting. But in this combat for a better world, each of us has a role to play. That is why I ask you to think of this as a personal commitment: make your voices heard, bring this message of tolerance and solidarity beyond the limits of your own community, create networks in favor of peace and share your abilities and your talents with those in need.

Together we can build world that is more peaceful, more prosperous and more just.

All my best wishes for success accompany you for your twenty-fourth annual meeting.

conscious refusal of the temptations of the world in favor of a Christian spiritual life, which will lead you to acquire the eternal riches of the Kingdom of God, which is "in your midst" (Luke 17:21).

My wish is that you all, organizers and participants in the present young adult meeting, may "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) and I invoke God's blessing on all your efforts and endeavors.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey

During my own visits to Taizé I have found it to be a place of welcome, acceptance, and reconciliation. It is a place where young people find a sense of community and time to be still in the presence of God. At this critical stage in the life of the human family, the meeting in Budapest will enable the community to extend its "pilgrimage of trust on earth".

My prayer is that each of you will draw closer to God at this time, gain strength from the knowledge that God's love is unconditional, and, as you return home from the pilgrimage, be inspired to serve the communities where you live, for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom of justice and peace.

"Are you the One who is to come?" In other words: are you the one God is sending to open a road towards the fullness of life, to give meaning to our existence, so often interwoven with superficiality and heading towards dead ends? Is not the question that the Baptizer asks Christ basic for each one of us, living as we do in a society full of noise, where so many voices assail us with promises of a facile happiness? How can we discern the real treasure hidden among all the counterfeit ones?

Jesus does not reply to this essential question with long speeches to advertise himself. He simply points to tangible realities, visible signs of the presence of the God who breaks into our daily life. These "signs of hope" may be tiny and easy to overlook, especially because of the lack of human prestige in the one who accomplishes them; they thus become for some a "stumbling-block."

That is why it is so important to deepen our ability to see, as Jesus explains to the crowd. What are we really looking for? To the extent that we gradually discover that the riches of this world will never satisfy the thirsts of our heart, we become more and more able to see signs of a new world based on solidarity and sharing, perhaps in places we did not expect. And we discover that this new world is not just a vague utopia; it is already at work in the lives of those who live not just for themselves but who respond to God's gift by the gift of their being, made concrete in the service of others.

- What signs of hope that announce a different future has God placed on our path?
- What "stumbling-blocks" keep us from noticing them?
- What can change our way of looking, to make it possible for us to see them?

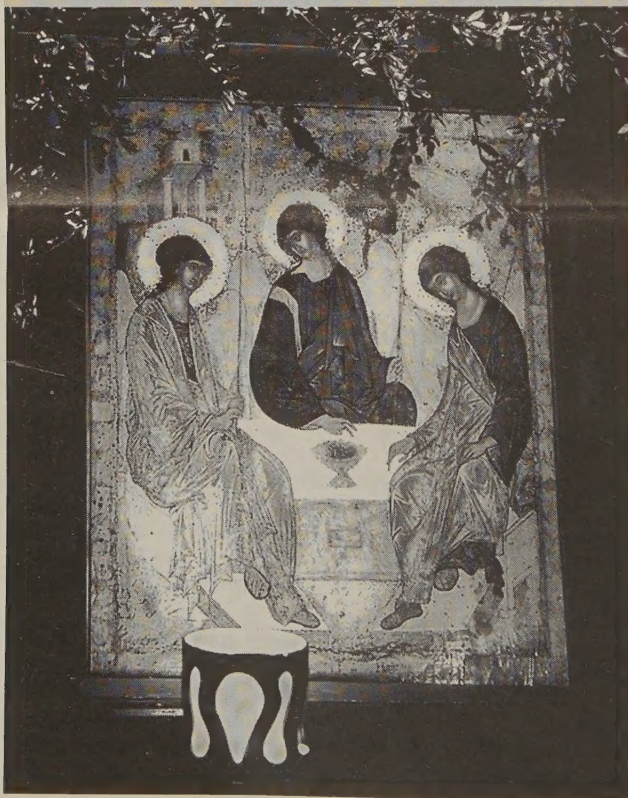
The Lord had promised to make Abraham and Sara a great nation. Now that they are old and childless, they do not see how this promise will be kept. Then one day, some strangers come to visit them. The couple shows their guests extraordinary hospitality, with no duplicity or ulterior motives; they simply give the best they have. And at the end, the fact that they will have a son is confirmed. For in these unknown guests, it was God himself who entered their life.

Sara reacts to this good news by laughing, thus expressing the gap between what God plans to do and her human possibilities. This gap is real, and inevitable, but it can be interpreted either in doubt—and then we have a laugh of derision and sarcasm—or in trust—and then we have a laugh of astonishment and joy. Sara is afraid and denies that she laughed; her trust still has to become stronger. But God will have the last laugh, because a year later the promised child will be born and will receive the name Isaac, which can be translated "The Lord laughs!"

This text, where God is described as a visitor, or perhaps even three travelers, was also interpreted by Christians as an anticipation of the revelation of a God who is Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Russian monk Andrej Rublev, in a period of great suffering for Russia, transformed the icon of "the hospitality of Abraham" to create his famous icon of the Trinity. In that painting, which shows the three heavenly messengers around a table, the space in front remains open for the person who contemplates the icon. In this way, a story that tells of human beings who welcome strangers, and in so doing welcome God without realizing it (see Hebrews 13:2), becomes a meditation on the God who wants to welcome human beings, inviting them to enter into the divine communion.

- By what inner attitudes and outward acts can we welcome others?
- Have I experienced in my life that what seemed impossible, humanly speaking, could come about with the help of God?
- How does God welcome me? How can I accept this invitation?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.



Letter from Taizé

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God of consolation,
 even were we to
 sense nothing of
 your presence, you
 are there. Your
 presence is invisible,
 but your Holy Spirit
 is always in us.

3 SUN Jn 4:5-12
 Jesus said: Any-
 one who drinks the water I give
 will never be thirsty again. The
 water I give them will become a
 spring of water within them,
 welling up to eternal life.

4 MON Jn 2:24-28
 John wrote to the
 first Christians: Let what you
 heard in the beginning remain
 in you. Thus you also will remain
 in the Son and in the Father.

5 TUE Heb 10:19-25
 Without waver-
 ing, let us hold fast to the hope
 we have and seek to stimulate
 one another in love and good-
 ness.

6 WED Jn 1:9-18
 The Word be-
 came flesh and lived among us.
 From God's fullness we have all
 received.

7 THU Ba 4:36-37
 The Lord says to
 his people: Look and see the joy
 that is coming to you from God.

8 FRI 1 Co 7:29-31
 Paul writes: From
 now on those who buy some-
 thing should live as if they did
 not possess and those who use
 the things of the world should
 do so without being engrossed
 in them. Because this world as
 we know it is passing away.

9 SAT Jude 20-21
 Keep yourselves
 in God's love as you wait for the
 mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ
 to bring you to eternal life.

1 FRI Is 30:15
 The Lord says:
 Your salvation is in returning
 and rest, your strength lies in
 calm and trust.

2 SAT Mt 13:44-46
 Jesus said: The
 kingdom of heaven is like a
 trader looking for precious
 pearls, who on finding one of
 great value, goes, sells every-
 thing he has and buys it.

These short readings are those
 read, day by day, at commu-
 nity prayer in L'azé. The Bible
 reference given indicates a
 slightly longer passage.

10 SUN Jn 9:1-41
 Jesus said to his
 disciples: We must do the work
 of the one who sent me, while
 the daylight lasts. While I am in
 the world, I am the light of the
 world.

11 MON Jr 17:5-8
 The person who
 trusts in the Lord is like a tree
 planted by the water: in a year of
 drought it is untroubled and
 never ceases to bear fruit.

12 TUE Rm 12:9-13
 Paul writes: Let
 your love be sincere, cling to
 what is good. Love one another
 with mutual affection.

13 WED Lm 3:22-26
 God's compas-
 sion is renewed every morning:
 his faithfulness is great. It is
 good to await in silence the sal-
 vation of the Lord.

14 THU Ep 3:7-12
 Paul writes:
 Through our faith in Christ Je-
 sus, we can approach God with
 complete confidence.

15 FRI 1 K 8:22-40
 Solomon prayed:
 Listen, Lord, forgive and act;
 deal with every person accord-
 ing to all they do, since you
 know their heart — you alone
 know the heart of everyone.

16 SAT Lk 5:27-32
 Jesus noticed a
 tax collector called Matthew sit-
 ting at the tax office and he said
 to him, "Follow me." And, leav-
 ing everything, Matthew got up
 and followed him.

17 SUN Jn 11:1-45
 Jesus said: I am
 the resurrection and the life.
 Those who believe in me, even
 though they die, will live.

18 MON Sl 4:1-10
 Deliver the op-
 pressed from the hands of the
 oppressor and you will be like a
 child of the Most High who will
 love you more than your own
 mother does.

19 TUE Rm 4:18-25
 St. Paul writes: Though there
 seemed to be no hope, Abra-
 ham hoped and believed, being
 fully convinced that God is able
 to do what he has promised.

20 WED Ezk 36:24-27
 The Lord says: I
 will give you a new heart. I will
 remove the heart of stone from
 your bodies and give you a
 heart of flesh. I shall put my
 Spirit in you.

21 THU Lk 6:46-49
 Jesus said: Who-
 ever comes to me, listens to my
 words and acts on them is like
 someone building a house who
 digs down deep and lays the
 foundations on rock.

22 FRI 1 Jn 4:16-21
 This is the com-
 mand Christ gave us: whoever
 loves God must also love their
 brother and sister.

23 SAT Ga 2:19-20
 Paul writes: It is no
 longer I who live, but Christ who
 lives in me.

24 SUN Mt 21:1-11
 PALM SUNDAY
 See, your king is approaching,
 humble and riding on a donkey
 and on a colt, the foal of a beast
 of burden.

25 MON Jn 12:20-30
 Jesus said: In
 truth, unless a grain of wheat
 falls into the earth and dies it re-
 mains only a single grain. But if
 it dies, it yields a big harvest.

26 TUE Ps 56
 You have deliv-
 ered my soul from death, Lord,
 so that I may walk in the pres-
 ence of God in the light of life.

27 WED Jn 16:20-22
 Before his pas-
 sion, Jesus said to his disciples:
 Now you are sad, but I shall see
 you again and your hearts will be
 full of joy. And that joy no one
 shall take from you.

28 THU Ps 62
 Trust in God at all
 times. Pour out your heart to
 God.

29 FRI Jn 19:16-27
 GOOD FRIDAY
 Carrying his own cross, Jesus
 went out of the city to the place
 known as Golgotha where they
 crucified him.

30 SAT Ph 2:1-11
 Taking the nature
 of a servant, Christ became as
 human beings are. And he hum-
 bled himself still further, re-
 maining faithful to the point of
 death, and death on a cross.
 Therefore God has exalted him,
 and has given him the name
 that is above all other names.

31 SUN Jn 20:11-18
 EASTER DAY
 The Risen Christ said to Mary of
 Magdala: Go and find my broth-
 ers and tell them: I am ascend-
 ing to my Father and your Fa-
 ther, to my God and your God.

MARCH

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

Jesus, our hope,
in you we find the
comfort with which
God can inundate
our lives, and we
understand that,
in prayer, we can
entrust everything
to you.

7 SUN Jn 20:19-31
The Risen Christ
breathed upon his disciples and
said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If
you forgive anyone's sins, they
are forgiven.

8 MON Ph 3:3-6
Trust in God with
all your heart and do not rely
upon your own understanding.

9 TUE Mt 18:1-4
Jesus said: Truly, I
tell you, the one who becomes
humble like a child is the great-
est in the kingdom of heaven.

10 WED Rm 12:3-13
Paul writes:
When you give, give gener-
ously, from the heart; when you
do works of mercy, do so with
joy.

11 THU 1 Co 13:8-13
Paul writes:
These three things remain:
Faith, hope and love. And the
greatest of them is love.

12 FRI Mk 11:22-25
Jesus said: When
you pray, if you hold anything
against anyone, forgive them,
and your Father in heaven will
forgive your sins.

13 SAT 2 Co 5:1-7
Paul writes: We
advance by faith, not by sight.

1 MON Ph 4:4-7
Rejoice in the
Lord always. Again I say, re-
joice! The Lord is near.

2 TUE Mt 28:16-20
Jesus, risen from
the dead, appeared to his disci-
ples and said: Go, make disci-
ples of all nations. And surely I
am with you always, to the end
of time.

3 WED Ep 3:14-19
May Christ dwell
in your hearts through faith, and
may you be rooted and estab-
lished in love, so that knowing
the love of Christ, which is be-
yond all knowledge, you may be
filled to the measure of all the
fullness of God.

4 THU Mt 6:31-34
Jesus said: strive
first for the kingdom of God and
God's righteousness. Do not
worry about tomorrow.

5 FRI Rm 12:1-13
Do not model your-
selves on the pattern of this
world, but let yourselves be
transformed by the renewing of
your mind so that you may dis-
cern the will of God.

6 SAT Jn 14:1-3
Jesus said: Do not
let your hearts be troubled. You
trust in God, trust also in me.

14 SUN Lk 24:13-35
When he was at
table with two disciples, the
Risen Christ took bread, said
the blessing, broke the bread
and began to give it to them.
And their eyes were opened
and they recognized him.

15 MON Ep 2:4-6
Because of his
great love for us, God, who is
rich in mercy, made us alive with
Christ even when we were dead
in our sins.

16 TUE Mk 6:45-52
When they saw
Jesus walking on the water, the
disciples were terrified. But at
once he spoke to them saying,
"Have courage, it's me. Don't be
afraid."

17 WED Jn 6:1-15
After the people
saw Jesus feed the crowd, they
began to say: "Surely this is the
prophet who is to come into the
world." Jesus, realizing that
they were about to come and
take him by force to make him
king, withdrew to the hills again,
alone.

18 THU Pr 4:18-27
The path of the
upright is like the light of dawn,
whose brightness increases to
the full light of day.

19 FRI Lk 17:3-4
Jesus said: If your
brother wrongs you seven times
in a day and seven times comes
back to you and says, "I repent",
forgive him.

20 SAT Dt 30:15-20
Choose life: loving
the Lord your God, listening to
the Lord's voice, holding fast to
him — for in this your life con-
sists.

21 SUN Jn 10:1-10
Jesus said: I am
the gate. Anyone who enters
through me will be safe: they will
go in and out, and will find pas-
ture.

22 MON Gn 12:1-5
The Lord said to
Abraham, "Leave your country,
your kinsfolk and your father's
house for the land I will show
you." And Abraham set out, as
the Lord had told him.

23 TUE Ac 17:22-28
In God we live and
move and have our being.

24 WED Zc 8:16-19
The Lord says to
his people: Within your gates
render judgments that are true
and make for peace. Yes, love
truth and peace.

25 THU Mk 16:15-20
St MARK
Jesus sent out his disciples,
saying: Go out to the whole
world; proclaim the gospel to all
creation.

26 FRI Mt 5:17-37
Jesus said: If you
are bringing your offering to the
altar and there remember that
your brother or sister has some-
thing against you, leave your of-
fering there before the altar, go
and be reconciled with them
first, and then come back and
present your offering.

27 SAT Am 8:11
The days are
coming, says the Lord, when I
shall send hunger upon the
land; not hunger for food or
thirst for water, but a hunger to
hear the Word of God.

28 SUN Jn 14:1-12
Jesus said: The
words I say to you are not just
my own, it is the Father, living in
me, who is doing his work.

29 MON Jm 1:17-27
God gave us
birth through the word of truth,
that we might be a kind of
first-fruits of all he created.

30 TUE 1 Co 2:1-5
Paul writes: I did
not come among you with elo-
quence or wise arguments to
announce the mystery of God. I
resolved to know nothing while I
was with you except Jesus
Christ, Jesus Christ crucified,
so that your faith might rest not
on human wisdom but on the
power of God.

These short readings are those
read, day by day, at commu-
nity prayer in Taizé. The Bible
reference given indicates a
slightly longer passage.

9 In the early years of our community life, we were aware of the doubts that could arise in us as we tried to respond day after day to Christ's call and we asked ourselves: how are we going to persevere? Gradually we realized that the power of the Holy Spirit was enough to sustain a vocation for an entire lifetime. And it became clear that we could not remain faithful to our vocation without making a life-commitment.

10 The Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément wrote these words which have been a real support for us, "One of the key words at Taizé is 'trust.' The meetings organized by the community in Europe and on the other continents make up part of what is called a 'pilgrimage of trust on earth.' The word 'trust' is perhaps one of the humblest of words, one of the most everyday and simplest words there are, but nevertheless it is one of the most essential. In trust there is the mystery of love, the mystery of communion, and finally there is the mystery of God." (From the book *Taizé, A Meaning to Life*, p. 69.)

11 In our community life, we know that simplicity and kind-heartedness are indispensable values. They may be two of the most radiant facets of the beauty of a communion.

12 1 Peter 2:21-25.

13 We can be liberated from what weighs upon us by speaking with someone who has a gift, drawn from faith, for discerning what lies deep in others' hearts, and who can listen to us with kindness. Through such conversations, the certainty of forgiveness becomes accessible.

14 John 15:11 and Luke 10:21.

To remain faithful our whole life long requires unflagging attentiveness.

In the course of our lifetime the Holy Spirit comes to visit our inner nights, and gradually our whole being is transfigured.⁹

In a world where new technologies are making possible advances never before imagined, it is important not to neglect fundamental values of the inner life—compassion, simplicity of heart and simplicity of life, humble trust in God, serene joy....¹⁰

The Gospel awakens us to compassion and to a kind-heartedness without bounds. There is nothing naive about this; it can require vigilance. And these values lead to a discovery: seeking to make others happy liberates us from ourselves.

Looking at others with love allows the beauty of the human soul to reveal itself to us.

Simplicity of heart and life keeps us away from twisting paths where we risk going astray.¹¹

The most striking thing about the Gospel is forgiveness—the forgiveness that God gives us, and the forgiveness God asks us to give one another. Even when he was abused and mistreated, Jesus the Christ did not threaten anyone; he forgave.¹² Alive in God, he continues to offer the freedom of forgiveness.

There is no will to punish in God.

By forgiving us, God removes what has wounded our hearts, in some cases since childhood or adolescence.

Entrust everything to God, even our worries... And then we realize that we are loved, comforted, healed.¹³

In the Gospel, Christ never calls us to sadness or gloom. On the contrary, he places peaceful joy within our reach, and even jubilation in the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

A young African who recently spent a year in Taizé explained how he gradually came to discover joy in the

wake of great misfortune. When he was seven years old, his father was killed. And his mother had to flee far away. He said:

"I wanted to find my parents' love again, the love I had not known since childhood. So I sought an inner joy, hoping it would give me strength in the midst of suffering. It enabled me to leave behind the loneliness of my childhood. I realized how important joy is in order to change everyday relationships and to find inner peace."¹⁵

God has breathed a soul into every human being.¹⁶ That soul is invisible, just as God is invisible. It is there that our desire for a communion with God is born.¹⁷

And how can we make this communion a reality? It is possible to encounter God truly in prayer, whether it is expressed with words or in silence.¹⁸

Nothing brings us as close to God as prayer with others, when it is supported by the beauty of song.¹⁹

Realizing that even death does not put an end to a communion with God brings peace to our hearts. Instead of leading to nothingness, it opens the way to a life of eternity when God welcomes our soul for ever.

Even when there are doubts in us, the presence of the Holy Spirit remains, in days of peace as well as in times of dryness.

Are we not the poor of the Gospel? Our humble faith is enough to welcome God's presence.²⁰ And the mere desire for it brings our soul back to life, on earth as in eternity.

15 "God's joy is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

16 Genesis 2:7.

17 In the Bible, the same word can mean both "soul" and "desire." The human soul bears the desire for God: "My soul is thirsting for God" (Psalm 42:2). "My soul yearns for you in the night" (Isaiah 26:9). God satisfies the longing of human beings: "Those who are thirsty may approach; those who desire may receive the water of life at no cost" (Revelation 22:17).

18 To have the simple desire for communion with God is already prayer. Saint Augustine wrote these words: "A desire that calls out to God is already a prayer. If you want to pray ceaselessly, then never stop desiring... Praying with many words does not mean praying for a long time, as some people think... So let us not use a great many words when we pray, but let us spend time praying in silence of heart." He also wrote, "If you desire to know God, you already have faith."

19 For some people the beauty of music, whether listened to in a church or in their own room, keeps alive a contemplative waiting.

20 During our last meeting with John XXIII, three of us were present; my brothers Max and Alain were with me. It was in 1963, shortly before he died. At one point during the conversation, the pope explained to us how he sometimes made decisions while praying. "I speak with God," he said, and then added, "Oh, very humbly! Oh, very simply!" It was around this time that brothers of our community began to go to Eastern European countries to visit Christians there. We went to listen, to be with those who were undergoing trials, to understand the Orthodox faith better. And now we are thankful that we can offer a welcome to so many young Orthodox Christians. We are happy to have discovered that one of the secrets of the Orthodox soul lies in a prayer open to contemplation.